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S. Appleby

MISCELLANEOUS

POEMS.

BY

JOHN HUNTER, ESQ.

Chi mi darà la voce e le parole
Convenienti a sì nobil soggetto?
Chi l'ale al verso presterà, che vole
Tanto, ch' arrivi a l'alto mio concetto?

ARIOSTO. Canto 3. stanza 1.

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MISCELLANEOUS POEMS.

TO MY BOOK.

Go, little book, and thy allurements try,
Mean as they are, to please Maria's taste;
Thou wilt discern no anger in her eye,
Then cease to fear, and to her presence haste.

For she is ever ready to commend,
And place each object in its fairest view;
And though in homely metre thou art penn'd,
Thy thoughts are genuine, thy encomiums true.

Charm'd with her wit, her sprightliness, and grace,
Thy author on her praises loves to dwell;
With glowing tints, and mimick art, to trace
Her portrait—happy! could he trace it well.

But if judicious criticism find
Coarse the design, the figure colour'd ill;
Tell her 'tis brightly colour'd in his mind,
Beyond the reach of any poet's skill.

TO MARIA.

No common thought, no inharmonious phrase,
Maria! should degrade thy poet's lays;
There Attic wit its polish'd tale should tell,
Expression glow, and sentiment excel.
Nor these can now my bounding hopes elude,
Since thou shalt every harsher term exclude;
Since thou o'er each idea shalt preside,
My genius heighten, and my pencil guide!
The time I first beheld thy graceful form,
Fancy, with ready art, with colouring warm,
Gave thee each charm that can embellish youth;
But what I fancy deem'd, I found was truth.
Whene'er thy frank discourse has sooth'd my ear,
No voice e'er seem'd so soft, no theme so clear,
Form'd to convince, and captivate, at will,
I've felt its energy—I feel it still.
Whether alone thy tuneful words I prize,
Or, aided by the sparkling of thine eyes,
They so affect me, it were hard to tell,
But this I find—no others please so well.
At this confession may no anger trace
A momentary blemish on thy face,

But let thy wonted smiles thy brow adorn,
Though far more dangerous than repulsive scorn.
'Tis not by light caprice, by distant pride,
By testy humour, eager to deride,
By captious temper, by demeanour sour,
That beauty spreads her undisputed power.
'Tis by a heart that generous feeling shows,
Warm to its friends, forgiving to its foes;
By disposition patient, mild, and sweet,
By conduct gentle, courteous, and discreet,
By wit, which truth and innocence refine,
In short, by rare endowments, such as thine,
From prudery free, with vanity unmix'd,
Her fame's extended, and her empire fix'd.
Frail is that friendship, and that passion slight,
On which reflection dwells not with delight;
They falsely beam, and idly pass away,
Like pleasing dreams that vanish with the day.
Not so the love which real worth inspires,
Pure are its motives, lasting are its fires;
Then no regrets our secret thoughts invade,
And shake the influence of the courted maid.
When temperate reason all her actions guides,
And modesty o'er every act presides:

When charity and goodness stand confest
The cherish'd inmates of her tender breast;
Such virtues ever shall enchanting be,
Such virtues ever shall enchant in thee.
If this effusion, from no lukewarm friend,
Should the fine feelings of thy taste offend,
Thou must not censure an attempt so bold,
For lips so lovely were not made to scold.
Soft tones, expressions affable, and kind,
Suit thy fair person, and accomplish'd mind.

TO A LADY,

WITH A PHIAL OF OTTAH OF ROSES.

The rose, the flower to beauty due,
With justice may be claim'd by you.
Young maids with roses wreaths prepare,
Deftly to bind their glossy hair,
Conferring on them fresher glow
Than nature's pencil can bestow.
The fragrance, which this glass encloses,
Was press'd from aromatic roses:
In Asia's genial clime they blew,
Expos'd to meaner damsels' view;
Transported from their native land,
They grace a brighter beauty's hand;
To whom, as in this phial's pent
Unnumber'd flowers of sweetest scent,
A thousand charms their aid impart,
To please the eye—to win the heart.

TO MARIA,

STUDYING FRENCH.

Long has our neighbour's tongue been found,
Beyond what others can express,
To yield the voice a softer sound,
To give the thoughts a gayer dress.

It is the language love desires,
The most obdurate heart to melt,
To represent his ardent fires,
To make his fond emotions felt.

When'er thou meetst, from Gallia's shore,
A volatile good-humour'd race,
With words impassion'd they'll adore
The beauties of thy mind and face.

It will these courteous swains delight
Thus to display their ready wit;
That, though with English men they fight,
To English women they submit.

But though in compliment they deal,
(With them such conduct is not base)
For once shall these inconstants feel
The sentiments they oft disgrace.

For every charm by which a flame
Is in their roving fancy lighted,
They shall, with guileless truth, exclaim,
In thee alone they find united.

Did I their vivid style possess,
Impetuous, tender, and refin'd,
My verse should fluently express
The secret raptures of my mind.

But all that genius could infuse,
And all that harmony impart,
I should not wish thee to peruse,
If thou couldst but peruse my heart.

ON

A LADY'S RECOVERING HER SPIRITS,

AFTER THE DEATH OF A FAVOURITE SINGING-BIRD.

THERE's no misfortune too severe
For lenient time to chase away;
Again thy sprightly tones I hear,
Again I see thy visage gay.

Unthinking! for a loss so slight
With tears thy blooming cheek to stain;
Those eyes were made for beaming bright,
And only causing others pain.

But wherefore shouldst thou e'er conceal
The various movements of thy mind?
Sure that in all thou mayst reveal
Love, friendship, sympathy, to find.

For if thy thoughts to joy give birth,
Or grief thy pensive features show;
We view thee beauteous in thy mirth,
Nor less attractive in thy woe.

Alike secure in both to charm,
O ever spare our watchful fears!
With smiles alone our peace alarm,
But never win us with thy tears.

THE DREAM.

WHILE late I lay, in slumbering trance,
Methought I saw my fair advance.
A muslin, white as Parian stone,
O'er her fine form was loosely thrown.
Her arms unveil'd; her slender waist
A spangled silken zone embrac'd;
Her glossy tresses, unconfin'd,
Now floated in the sportive wind,
Now round her snowy bosom twin'd.
Such brightness from her visage beam'd,
She more than Eve's descendant seem'd.
On charms, so worthy to be prais'd,
I long in dumb amazement gaz'd.
Her lips, from which persuasion flows,
In thoughts that melt, in phrase that glows,
Our not unmeaning silence broke,
And thus in tuneful accent spoke.
Oft have I sportingly profest
That lovers' vows were but a jest,

11

Th' amusement of a mind at ease,
Or frivolous attempts to please.
Now first I kind compassion know,
I feel a new sensation glow
Impetuous through my alter'd frame;
I feel a penetrating flame
Search my young bosom, and impart
Strange tumults to my aching heart.
And thou no longer shalt complain
That I am volatile, and vain;
Renew thy fond request, nor fear
A cold reply, or look severe.
Such words my vagrant doubts suppress,
And boundless rapture fill'd my breast.
No cross resistance, haughty glance,
Arous'd me from my heavenly trance;
But kind regards, responsive sighs,
And blushes, bright as Tyrian dyes,
Coyness, half yielding, half afraid,
Rejected not the suit I made;
But told, in silence, far more clear,
Than softest cadences appear,
"The secret that my mouth conceals,
My looks betray, my bosom feels."

But whilst, ineffably benign,
Her beaming eyes encounter'd mine,
And bade me hope each bliss supreme
That love could wish, or fancy dream,
The east disclos'd unwelcome day,
And all the vision pass'd away.

STANZE

SOPRA LA MORTE D'UN CANARIO.

Piu la voce non risuona
Dell' augel che fece incanto
Alla sua dolce padrona
Col soave ameno canto;
Ne il vedrem più mai qual pria
Farle a desco compagnia.

Suo destin non fu di andare
Per lo immenso etere errando:
Non le selve rallegrare
Gaiamente carolando,
Nè dal turgido Euro o Noto
Esser via portato a nuoto.

Più propizio ad esso il Fato
Alla sua Maria d' intorno
Volteggiare aveagli dato
Ve soletta fea soggiorno,
E posarlesi sul dito
Sottil, bianco e ben tornito.

Vago, armonico augelletto!
Da man candida gentile
Ch' in ben far sempre ha diletto,
E ch' all' alma è in ciò simile;
Ti veniva presentato
Nutrimento delicato.

Troppo presto, oimè! finita
Del tuo canto è l' armonia!
Troppo presto di tua vita
Il leggier soffio sen gia.
Ma tua morte, oh te felice!
Da Maria lagrime elice.

S'il destino avesse dato
Simil sorte ad un pastore,
Quanta invidia avria destato:
In sua vita, il di lei core
Ottenere; e avere in sorte
D' esser pianto dopo morte.

TO CAROLINE.

'Tis stated rhymers ne'er tell truth;
Do you believe it, gentle maid?
An accusation so uncouth
Is harder to be prov'd than said.

Howe'er a method I'll pursue
Shall show this bold opinion wrong.
What method is it? making you
The only subject of my song.

And who, in this abode of sin,
Is proof against your cunning charms;
For whom your prattle cannot win,
Your mild benevolence disarms.

To please each eye, and station, well,
You unexhausted means afford;
Possessing, avaricious belle!
Of mental wealth a precious hoard.

In handsome order, marshall'd, stand
Ingenious wit, and elocution,
Fun, humour, archness, at command,
Employ'd in praise—or persecution;

A spirit firm, and resolute,
A happy talent of persuasion,
A subtlety that will confute,
Or, press'd, will find some apt evasion.

As if these riches were a trifle,
With keen rapacious glance you look
On foreign stores, and boldly rifle
The treasures of each sapient book.

As mighty kings their power enhance
By subsidizing some ally;
So you the wit of Rome and France
Enlist to swell your own supply.

To me a little portion lend,
From this inestimable mine;
In need to help a faithful friend
Must please the heart of Caroline.

That heart where meets, in graceful union,
Each gift a damsel should possess,
Where sage reflection holds communion
With unaffected cheerfulness;

Where warm philanthropy infuses
A wish that all should happy be,
Which kindly others' faults excuses,
Faults, from which only you are free.

A single brilliant I implore,
Which, surely, would be miss'd from you,
As little as a drop of ore
From the rich mountain of Peru.

But if you slight my supplication,
And have, too hastily, decreed,
Never to grant me a donation,
For which so earnestly I plead;

O! for such unexpected pride,
May every hope, by you exprest,
By froward fortune be denied,
If form'd—against your interest.

This malice may your wrath excite,
This dulness may your patience tire!
But in whate'er I say, or write,
When you my voice, or muse, inspire,

Believe me, through each varied scene,
That yields delight, or discontent;
Whatever pleases you I mean,
What'er offends is never meant.

TO THREE SISTERS.

FORTUNE we often see distribute
Her favours out of place, and season;
To what can we such freaks attribute?
She's woman—pray, is that the reason?

She lately gave a worthless peasant
A Persian essence, rich, and clear,
Who little merited the present;
But why?—have patience, and you'll hear.

In case, with patent lock to fit it,
He kept it, pack'd with city neatness;
And never would the churl permit it
To scatter round ambrosial sweetness.

Though fix'd no other should enjoy it,
Nor crony, mistress, nor relation;
He would not for himself employ it,
No! not its finest exhalation.

But once (it was an instance rare)
He found himself in bounteous humour;
And sent it to three ladies fair,
By virtue lov'd, extoll'd by rumour.

Who seem, to each discerning being,
In all accomplishments excelling;
Who more enchant the sense of seeing,
Than it can please the sense of smelling.

Them he beholds, with pure delight,
Ever some novel grace appearing;
And as their beauty charms his sight,
Their voice transports his sense of hearing.

But, by such conduct long pursuing,
Which now such extacy dispenses;
He, through the dangerous sense of viewing,
May altogether lose his senses.

THE EPHESIAN MATRON.

If e'er there was a thread-bare tale related,
It is the one I'm on the point to tell;
Then why select a fact, so often stated,
When any other might have done as well?
Ye critics! who each work decry,
'Tis vain for scribblers to reply;
So leaving you objections to advance,
I'll risk my story, and abide my chance.
At Ephesus, in former days,
There liv'd a lady, prudent, good, and wise,
Though singular in all her ways,
Who lov'd her husband dearer than her eyes.
Alas! he died; to tell you how
I deem superfluous detail;
In short he died as men do now,
And left his wife to weep and wail.
Howe'er, conformable to his professions,
She was the heiress to his whole possessions.
So kind a will, you think, might sooth her loss;

To others such a rich donation
Might be the means of consolation,
But she regarded gold as so much dross.
For now, abhorring the officious light,
Which to the prying world her grief exposes,
Resolv'd with him to seek the realms of night,
Within his tomb her beauty she encloses.
O lofty virtue! love without an equal!
But truce with rapture, and attend the sequel.
Two days she pass'd, with no supplies,
But hollow groans, and piercing cries,
Though by some cavillers it is avow'd,
That real anguish is not quite so loud.
A little from this doleful scene
Another corpse maintain'd his station;
But his memorial, I ween,
Was of a different fabrication.
For, rais'd by general consent,
A gibbet was his monument.
As an example he was left there chain'd;
A soldier, handsomely rewarded,
The executed felon guarded,
And by the magistrate it was ordain'd,

That if remov'd by force, or by contrivance,
(Judging it must be with the guard's connivance)
The careless sentinel should take his place;
A hard but necessary case.
During the darkness of the night,
He spied a small uncertain light,
That issued from the neighbouring tomb;
He thither hastes, he hears the dame
In lamentable terms exclaim
Against the harshness of her doom.
He enters in, and viewing with surprise,
The novel picture plac'd before his eyes,
He asks the meaning of those sobs and sighs?
Wherefore those melancholy tones,
The feeble glimmer of the lamp,
The sable dress, the piled stones,
The dismal mansion black and damp?
Attentive to the object of her tears,
These frivolous demands she scarcely hears.
The corpse, extended at her side,
Though dumb, sufficiently replied,
And show'd too well her fatal resolution.
The honest sentry, with compassion rent,
To see how tragically matters went,
Exerted all his stock of elocution,

To prove, though in this world we bear
No trifling load of grief, and care,
Vexations, crosses, plagues, and strife,
Still there are greater ills than life.
But, Madam, if your vow be such,
That not a morsel you will touch,
At least allow me, by your side,
My humble supper to provide;
You need not share the scanty treat,
Your presence my repast will bless,
Nor, trust me, will you die the less,
For seeing a poor soldier eat.
To this the mourner lent a gracious ear,
And gave consent—for what had she to fear?
The supper brought, this short harangue ensued,
Deliver'd in a manner somewhat rude.
What reason, lady, can you have
To covet thus an early grave?
Do you then think, if it had been your fate
Before your husband to have died,
He would have quarrel'd with this mortal state,
And fondly moulder'd by your side?
Oh, no! perhaps a tear, or two,
Had prov'd his tender passion true:

And then, conceiving weeping vain,
He would have liv'd his usual train.
Must you at twenty, in this horrid place,
Inter the beauties of your youthful face?
To your perfections be more just,
Nor think of mingling with the dust,
Till age and wrinkles make it clear
You have no farther business here.
At this soft speech she rais'd her languid head
From the cold tomb of the lamented dead;
But, quitting her fastidious pride,
His rhetoric she does not chide;
She even relishes his praise.
How useful is discerning wit!
He leads her by such cunning ways,
At length she deigns to eat a bit.
He has the ingenuity to find
The means her lamentations to appease,
To change the stubborn purpose of her mind,
And all by imperceptible degrees;
Inducing her with him to form fresh ties,
Whilst at her feet her former consort lies.
Thus in bewitching converse lost,
A sudden noise their courtship crost:

The soldier hurries to his station,
But ah, unhappy man, too late!
Some friendly robber, or relation,
Had in the interval appear'd,
The gibbet of its burthen clear'd,
And he must undergo his fate.
When he returns, his tears proclaim
His dire misfortune to the dame.
What will the law, she cries, allow no grace?
No, none, and I must bid adieu
To joy, to life, to love, and you.
You shall not meet (she said) a death so base!
Since nothing else can remedy the case,
Here, take this corpse, and fill the vacant place.
All is permitted to preserve a lover,
And none, I'm sure, the cheat can e'er discover.

O woman, fickle at the best!
Unsteady in thy thoughts, and actions,
Wert thou of constancy possest,
Too exquisite were thy attractions!

FROM THE ITALIAN.

The season of my youthful prime
On rapid wings has flown away,
Admitting unrelenting time
To mix my auburne locks with grey.
Alas! the fair, for ever prone
To mystery and deceit,
To me this grating truth alone
Insultingly repeat.

Their scornful smiles when I appear,
Their inattention when I speak,
Tell me, "we do not wish you here,
It is not such as you we seek."
And off from me they lightly fly,
To join a boyish band;
And then loquacious is their eye,
Their sprightly foot and hand.

But shall I, with unmanly tears,
My heart depress, and cheek bedew?

Ah, no! a gleam of joy appears,
A brighter prospect is in view.
Long since I pluck'd the myrtle bough
On Gnidos' flowery strand;
There, peacefully, let others now
With love be hand in hand.

Though me the fickle sex disown,
With youth, and liveliness, to toy;
With them each comfort is not flown,
With them not vanish'd every joy.
Henceforth devoted be my days
To friendship and to wine;
And since my myrtle-wreath decays,
I'll bind my brows with vine.

The charm of beauty, though so bright,
Soon withers as the vernal rose;
But thou, O friendship! canst delight,
Amid December's gloomy snows.
Love, puerile, and capricious, flies,
With youth's vivacious bloom;
But nought pure friendship's sacred ties
Can sever, but the tomb.

And those gay nymphs, who now disdain
On us to fix their sparkling eyes,
When age has cool'd their flattering train,
Once more our company shall prize.
And we, my friends, when we shall be
To our fair guests presented,
We'll drink their health, with heartfelt glee,
And then we'll die contented.

ARGUMENT.

Count Ugolino, by treachery, had rendered himself master of Pisa, with the assistance of Roger, archbishop of that city; but his apostate friend, accusing him afterwards of delivering up their castles to the Florentines, he was thrown into a dungeon, with all his children, and starved to death. They were both placed in the third circle of hell; but the priest, as his crimes were greater, was condemned to the additional punishment of having his head serve as the perpetual nourishment to his betrayed accomplice. This story is pathetically told in the thirty-third canto of Dante's Inferno. I have adopted the terza rima of the original, though novel to the English ear, and difficult to the English poet.

COUNT UGOLINO.

From the dire food the sinner rais'd his head;
And, wiping from his mouth the clotted gore
Of that foul pasture, upon which he fed,
He thus began:—Immeasurable store
Of bitter woe thou will'st me to renew,
Which far exceeds what mortal ever bore.

But if from my narration shall ensue
Scorn to the traitor whom I thus chastise,
My joy and grief thou shalt together view.
I know thee not, nor hither in what guise
Thou cam'st; but by thy speech a Florentine
I deem thee, though a stranger to my eyes.
Some time ago I was Count Ugoline;
Archbishop Roger was this bloody fiend,
Whom in my gripe I ever shall confine.
To tell how, lur'd by this perfidious friend,
To my stern foes a captive I became,
Who murder'd me, I need no moment spend.
But, what thou hast not learnt from common fame,
How more than usual was my death severe,
I will inform thee to this felon's shame.
A little window in the dungeon drear,
The tower of famine, from my durance, hight,
Where silent sorrow drops th' unheeded tear,
Had shown me, several days, a niggard light,
When this foreboding dream appear'd to me,
Which blaz'd futurity upon my sight;
This wretch I saw, clearly as seen by thee,
Hunting a wolf, with whelps, upon that hill
For which the Pisans cannot Lucca see.
With dogs, trained up to scent, pursue, and kill,

Sismondi, with Lanfranchi, he had plac'd
In front, his savage purpose to fulfil.
Not long the father, and the sons, were chac'd,
When by the thirsty bloodhounds they were seiz'd,
Who tore their entrails, and their forms defac'd.
I woke, with petrifying horror freez'd,
And heard my children in their sleep complain,
Begging for bread, but none their claim appeas'd.
Hard is thy heart, if thou from tears refrain,
Divining that which harrow'd me with fear,
And no distress thy pity can obtain!
Their slumbers fled: and now, approaching near
The time, when we receiv'd our scant repast,
Our dreams forewarn'd us fatal news to hear.
And soon the jailer made the portal fast;
By the harsh clang in greater tremor thrown,
A wistful look upon my sons I cast,
I could not weep—my very heart was stone.
They wept, beholding my distressful case,
And Anselmuccio cried, in piteous tone,
Why dost thou gaze so, father, on my face?
I could not answer: all that day and night,
Until the following sun commenc'd his race,
Grief chain'd my tongue. Soon as the dawn of light

Disclos'd our features, wan with fast and care,
And in my sons my likeness met my sight,
I gnaw'd my hands in anguish and despair.
Thinking that hunger urg'd this horrid deed,
All cried at once, thyself, Oh! father, spare,
And on the vitals of thy children feed;
This wretched being we receiv'd from thee,
Oh! then resume thy gift in time of need.
I hush'd my grief that they might tranquil be;
That day, and all the next, no word we spoke.
Oh, flinty earth, unmov'd, such crimes to see!
When the fourth day had on our misery broke,
My Gaddo, falling prostrate at my side,
Exclaim'd in vain, thee, father! I invoke,
When most I want thine aid; then groan'd, and died.
Ere the sixth day was finish'd, one by one,
The rest expir'd! Already blind, I tried
Alternately to clasp each lifeless son:
Three days I mourn'd their fate, when famine
wrought
What grief was insufficient to have done.

CONCLUSION.

It is a most ungrateful task to write!
The anxious author labours day, and night,
To make his volume worthy of the light.

At length his work appears; and he relies
On warm applauses, and uplifted eyes;
But on the shelf his book unask'd-for lies.

For in this land of avarice and gain,
Left unregarded is the poet's strain,
And all his arts to please, alas! are vain.

By him can sordid mortals be control'd,
Whose only passion is a lust of gold?
Then cease thy efforts, bard! thou art too bold.

Or should he on a woman's praises dwell,
(Seducing subject!) ever prompt to tell
The worth, and graces, that he loves so well;

When he shall hope his recompense to find,
His meed is angry words, and looks unkind,
Or the light promise of a varying mind.

No more, fond man! the idle theme pursue,
Misled by pleasures of fallacious hue;
Pleasures how dear, if permanent and true!

Thinkst thou a stranger's purpose thou canst shake,
Inspire the selfish, or reform the rake?
Wild dreamer! from thy crazy visions wake.

Is sense so suasive, is reproof so keen,
From faults the trifler, and the prude, to wean?
No! they will be as they have ever been.

Seek not or vice, or folly, to chastise,
All means are fruitless thou canst e'er devise
To mend the world—be silent, and be wise.

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